

THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
EASTERN DISTRICT *of* TENNESSEE

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Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

Eastern District of Tennessee

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, August 5, 2021

Knoxville Woman Pleads Guilty To Scheme To Defraud The Small Business Administration's COVID-19 Economic Relief Programs

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. – On August 5, 2021, Porsha Tims Bush, 41, of Knoxville, entered a guilty plea to one count of executing a wire fraud scheme in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Tennessee at Knoxville.

Sentencing is set for January 7, 2022, at 2:00 pm, before United States District Judge Katherine Crytzer. Bush faces a term of imprisonment of up to 20 years, a fine of up to \$250,000, and a term of supervised release of up to three years. Bush has agreed to pay restitution to the victims of her fraud scheme in the amount of \$471,621.

As part of the written plea agreement filed with the court, Bush waived an indictment by a federal grand jury and agreed to plead guilty to one count of wire fraud, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1343.

According to court filings, from March to June 2020, Bush applied for ten loans for \$547,286 through the Small Business Administration's (SBA) Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) program. Bush submitted false and fraudulent applications under the names of various companies that either did not qualify for COVID-19 relief funds or that did not exist. Bush submitted nine fraudulent applications to financial institutions seeking PPP funds and one fraudulent application to the SBA seeking EIDL funds. As part of her fraud scheme, Bush submitted fabricated supporting records and made false statements about the number of employees she had, the revenue she generated, and the amount of payroll expenses she incurred. Bush also made false statements about the corporate entities and the intended use of the loan proceeds.

In one instance, on March 30, 2020, Bush submitted an online application to the SBA in the name of Enlightenment Family Care, Inc., seeking \$150,000 in EIDL funds. On the application, Bush falsely claimed that Enlightenment Family Care employed four individuals, generated \$335,651 in gross revenue, and paid wages of \$45,651 in the twelve months preceding the COVID-19 pandemic. These claims were all false. In further support of the application, Bush included fraudulent supporting documents, including a falsified Profit and Loss Statement and a fabricated Internal Revenue Service Form 941, Employer Quarterly Federal Tax Return, for the first quarter of 2020.

As a result of Bush's fraudulent scheme, lenders approved eight of her fraudulent applications. Rather than using the funds for permissible business expenses, as required by the SBA, Bush used the money to pay off

personal debt, pay for personal travel, purchase clothes and electronics, and to fund her daily lifestyle.

During the investigation, law enforcement obtained warrants to seize approximately \$77,820.44 in fraudulent proceeds held in three bank accounts controlled by Bush. As set forth in the filed plea agreement, Bush will forfeit these seized funds to the United States.

This case is the result of an investigation conducted by the FBI.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney William A. Roach, Jr.

On May 17, 2021, the Attorney General established the COVID-19 Fraud Enforcement Task Force to marshal the resources of the Department of Justice in partnership with agencies across government to enhance efforts to combat and prevent pandemic-related fraud. The Task Force bolsters efforts to investigate and prosecute the most culpable domestic and international criminal actors and assists agencies tasked with administering relief programs to prevent fraud by, among other methods, augmenting and incorporating existing coordination mechanisms, identifying resources and techniques to uncover fraudulent actors and their schemes, and sharing and harnessing information and insights gained from prior enforcement efforts. For more information on the Department's response to the pandemic, please visit <https://www.justice.gov/coronavirus>.

Anyone with information about allegations of attempted fraud involving COVID-19 can report it by calling the Department of Justice's National Center for Disaster Fraud (NCDF) Hotline at 866-720-5721 or via the NCDF Web Complaint Form at: <https://www.justice.gov/disaster-fraud/ncdf-disaster-complaint-form>.

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Topic(s):

Financial Fraud

Component(s):

Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)

USAO - Tennessee, Eastern

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